

vulnerable people to try their luck? No, not this either.

Here was the big news: The government will be adopting new, more politically correct rhetoric. Under this administration, we will no longer have “illegal aliens,” not because they will secure the border; just because they now will be called “noncitizens” or “undocumented migrants” and so on.

These priorities are almost a parody of leftwing governance: not securing the border, not a better plan for the children, just woke proofreading. This is not going to get the job done.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. President, on a related matter, of course, the flow of actual people is not our only border security problem. Americans are dying and communities are being hollowed out because foreign drug dealers and profiteers have taken our opioid crisis as a business opportunity.

Fentanyl and fentanyl analogues that pour into our country impose a staggering, tragic loss. In 2020, the CDC recorded more overdose deaths than any year on record. They attributed the spike primarily to synthetic opioids like fentanyl.

My home State of Kentucky logged a 50-percent year-on-year increase in overdose deaths. Fentanyl and its constantly changing analogues are as toxic and lethal an illegal drug as there is. We are talking about substances that can be orders of magnitude more potent than morphine.

Customs and Border Protection say fentanyl seizures jumped more than 70 percent in fiscal year 2020. They are on pace for another record year in 2021. Much of this poison is manufactured in and exported from China.

The scope of this crisis is truly staggering. But incredibly, some on the political left want to respond to this national crisis by letting the criminal status of fentanyl analogues lapse this spring.

People want to let these drugs become legal. They actually want to let these drugs become legal. I am not making this up. Fentanyl analogues are poised to fall off the schedule of controlled substances in just a few weeks if Congress does not act, and some corners of the soft-on-crime left want us to do nothing. They are unhappy with the sentences that be can be imposed on drug dealers as a result.

These people are seriously arguing—seriously arguing that we should let these substances flow even more freely through American streets and American neighborhoods, costing who knows how many additional American lives to help some drug dealer avoid prison.

I understand that even among Democrats who say they don't want to decriminalize these poisons, there is some effort to kick the can a few months with a temporary extension so that a soft-on-crime bill could be crafted and forcibly paired with this step.

Look, these are terrible ideas, just terrible ideas. The right thing to do is

obvious. This isn't a trick question. We need to permanently schedule fentanyl analogues, take this permanent step to protect Americans, and be done with it. We should not just kick the can down the road for 2 months or 5 months or 12 months. We should not let this commonsense step be held hostage for liberal horse trading. We simply need to do the right thing.

Congress cannot hold American lives and communities hostage to try to grease the skids for drug dealers. Continuing to ban these analogues is not even a recipe for mass incarceration. The main effect is to cut down on the incoming supply of these poisons by changing the incentives for producers in China and other foreign countries.

The Department of Justice reports that, in the last 3 years, only 8 people—8 people would have qualified for the mandatory minimum sentences that some people are complaining about. More than anything else, scheduling these terrible drugs is a harm reduction and prevention tool. It works upstream. It disincentivizes their manufacture and their import into our country.

Too many of our neighbors have already been taken from us. Too many communities have already been hollowed out. There is simply no excuse for inaction.

It should not just be a Republican priority to slam the door on the opioid epidemic in every possible way. This should actually be a bipartisan no-brainer. Let's permanently schedule these analogues and keep this poison out of our land and out of our citizens' bloodstreams.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. President, now, on one final matter, this afternoon, President Biden is sending his top national security officials to brief Members on his misguided plan to abandon the battlefield in Afghanistan.

As I said when this decision was announced, the enemies that threaten America, our allies, and the people of Afghanistan are not vanquished. Taliban retribution and repression and the terror of al-Qaida, ISIS, and the Haqqani Network will likely only grow after we have left.

I know many colleagues on both sides of the aisle share my concerns. I expect that the administration's representatives will face tough questions about the rationale behind their plan for a rushed withdrawal.

So it is appropriate to ask: Does the Taliban share the administration's commitment to a negotiated solution, to not harming Afghan women or girls or seeking vengeance on those who have worked with the United States to root out terror? Somehow I doubt it.

Does the administration have a plan for keeping terrorists off-balance in the absence of troops and leverage in the region? Will it seek to maintain the 2001 AUMF, which authorizes the ongoing counterterrorism operations that have actually kept our homeland safe for 20 years?

How does the administration plan to maintain our insight into terrorist activities or our ability to strike them without a presence on the ground, to sustain our partners who are doing the fighting? I worked hard to find common ground with this administration on foreign policy, but if the White House is serious about making America, our allies, and our interests more secure, it will need to start tacking toward a more enduring approach centered on strength, grounded in reality and not wishful thinking.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the order of yesterday, the Senate recess from 12:30 p.m. until 2:15 p.m. and that at 2:15 p.m., the Senate proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Gensler nomination and the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination; that following the cloture vote, the Senate resume legislative session and the Senate recess until 4 p.m. to allow for the all-Senators briefing; further, that if cloture is invoked on the Gensler nomination, all postcloture time be considered expired at 5 p.m.; that immediately following the disposition of the Gensler nomination, the Senate resume consideration of the Monaco nomination and vote on confirmation as provided under the previous order; that if either nomination is confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; finally, that following the confirmation vote on the Monaco nomination, the Senate resume legislative session.

The ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Therefore, Senators should expect one rollcall vote at 2:15 p.m. and two rollcall votes at 5 p.m.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 1216 AND H.R. 7

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I understand there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading en bloc.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the bills by title en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1216) to extend the temporary scheduling order for fentanyl-related substances.

A bill (H.R. 7) to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide more effective remedies to victims of discrimination in

the payment of wages on the basis of sex, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, in order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceeding en bloc.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar en bloc.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

COVID-19 HATE CRIMES ACT— Continued

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Republican whip.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last fall, there was a concern among many around the country, many Republican voters, that if elected—Democrats in the House, the Senate, and the White House—if they had the whole of government, they would try to implement massive change, transformative change, as it was described. There was a consistent view articulated by Democrats in other places around the country that it would never happen because Joe Biden, after all, is a moderate. These ideas are crazy ideas. Nobody would ever do some of the things that are being talked about.

Well, I have to say that pretty much everything that was predicted is now coming true, at least as it pertains to legislation that is being advanced by Democrats here in the Congress and by the White House, starting, of course, with the massive amount of spending, the massive expansion of the government.

We saw that with the coronavirus relief bill, which ended up being about \$2 trillion. That was on top of the \$4 trillion that Congress, in a bipartisan way last year, had put toward coronavirus relief. Much of that \$2 trillion—in fact, most of it, about 90 percent of it—didn't have anything to do with coronavirus. Only about 10 percent of all that spending of nearly \$2 trillion was actually related to the coronavirus. Most of it was other things that Democrats had wanted to fund, that had been on their wish list, if you will, for some time, and expansion of government.

Well, if that weren't enough, there is now talk of an "infrastructure" bill that would spend on the order of another \$2.5 to \$3 trillion—again, much of which is unrelated to infrastructure. If you define "infrastructure" simply as roads and bridges, things that most people think of as infrastructure, the

number that has been used is 6 percent of that entire bill is about infrastructure. If you add in broadband and a few other things, it gets slightly higher than that.

The point is that most of the spending in this bill is unrelated to infrastructure. It is another \$2.5 to \$3 trillion expansion of government, new spending financed—some with tax increases but a lot of it just adding to the debt, just putting it on the credit card and handing the bill to our children and grandchildren, something that has been routinely done around here for a long time.

Mr. President, what I think people should find concerning is that the worst fears predicted about what the left might do if in charge of this country are, in fact, coming true. Much of this new spending—by the way, the infrastructure bill is a first installment. There is another bill to follow, we are told, that would include more trillions in spending, dealing with other issues, including healthcare.

You have this massive expansion of government, massive amount of new spending, unprecedented, truly unprecedented in history, coupled with massive tax hikes, also unprecedented. What is being talked about just in the first infrastructure bill is over \$1 trillion in new taxes. The taxing, spending, borrowing patterns that we predicted would happen are, in fact, coming true. Add to that other things that were suggested and proposed throughout the fall and the course of the campaigns.

Subsequent to that included adding DC as a State. So adding DC as a State is going to pass the House of Representatives. I am not sure if they are voting on it today, but it has either been voted on or will be voted on. It will pass the House of Representatives. That is a very, very serious, serious proposal which dramatically changes the U.S. Senate and, I believe, what the Founders intended with respect to the District of Columbia.

Then you add to it legislation that has already passed the House and is being contemplated being passed here in the Senate that would federalize elections in this country, that would codify ballot harvesting, and that would ban voter ID, photo ID, which is something that, I think, most Americans think is a very wise thing to do when it comes to election integrity, to make sure that the people who are voting actually are who they say they are. Voter ID is a pretty important part of that. It would have the taxpayers finance—publicly fund—campaigns in this country. I can't imagine the American taxpayers, among all of the other things that they have to finance in the government, also want to finance the campaigns that they have to sit through.

It would politicize the Federal Election Commission, which, in the past, has been a balanced—three Republican, three Democrat—bipartisan committee

that has overseen and regulated elections in this country. So it would politicize it and give the Democrats an advantage, a partisan advantage, on the Federal Election Commission.

All of those things are in this elections bill, which would transform—I mean, I am talking literally transform—the way we do elections in this country, which historically and by way of the Constitution and the law have been handled and administered at the State level. States have been very involved.

What this would do is consolidate more power in Washington, DC, and pull the regulation of elections up to the Federal Government, coupled with all of the changes that I just mentioned. There is no way—absolutely no way—that even if passed they could be done, could be implemented, for the upcoming 2022 election, which secretaries of state from across the country, including Democratic secretaries of state, have indicated.

So that is another thing that is on the liberal wish list that I mentioned: the federalizing of our elections—taking them away from the States where, historically, elections have been handled and administered—and bringing them here, essentially nationalizing our elections.

Then there is the Green New Deal. The Green New Deal is, I believe, being introduced again today by a number of Democratic Senators and House Members—something, again, that would completely change the way we fuel our country in ways that would drive up dramatically the costs that an average consumer in this country and an average family would have to pay for energy. It would be done through mandates, regulations, and heavy-handed government requirements as opposed to incentivizing some of these things that, I think, we all agree we should be doing when it comes to cleaning up our environment. The Green New Deal is the opposite of that. The Green New Deal is a government, Washington, DC, mandate, requirement, heavy-handed regulatory approach to that issue and something that has struck fear in the hearts of literally tens of millions of Americans since it began being talked about only a few years ago.

Those are just a handful on the list of what I would call horrors for which the left has been advocating for some time in this country. All of these things could be accomplished if the Democrats are able to follow through with another thing that they said they would never do and are now talking about and if they have the votes would do, and that is to do away with the legislative filibuster, which is a feature of our democracy that goes back literally 200 years to our Nation's founding and has ensured through those years that the minority has a voice in our policymaking process; that there is an opportunity for both sides to collaborate, compromise, and to ensure that there isn't majoritarian rule. The Founders